

Indian Rose Annual - IRA 1992

ROSE GROWING ABROAD

M. S. Viraraghavan

During a recent visit abroad we saw several beautiful rose gardens, ranging from very large public gardens to those of champion exhibitors, and I'd like to share some observations with you. Broadly speaking, the observations relate to 2 aspects :

1. Landscaping, and
2. Cultural practices.

Of course, what follows is essentially highly subjective, being a very personal reaction.

Landscaping

If one is to sum up what basically is different about landscaping abroad, I would say it is a relaxed informality of approach where roses are not rigidly planted in beds with military precision, but are mainly the dominant theme supplemented by diverse other features. The latter could be groupings with other plants or various architectural features (not painted), and the skilful use of open vistas, enclosed areas as well as water. It is as though the Queen of flowers, like other modern queens, mingles with the commoners in order to remain popular.

Quite sometime back, the way to make an effective rose garden was demonstrated by Dr. B. P. Pal, when he made a feature of standard roses underplanted with blue pansies. In a similar way, we found that in many

Western gardens, roses, even the H.T's were cheerfully mixed with a variety of small growing annuals and perennials, e.g. campanulas (bell flowers) begonias and various other dwarf plants.

Generally, 2 objectives were realized by this kind of grouping ---

- a. setting off the beauty of roses by mixing them with other plants of contrasting foliage, flowers and colours, and growth habit, and
- b. prolonging the season where the rose garden is full of flowers while seeking to fill up gaps, when roses are not in bloom, by timing the other plants to flower in those periods.

Some of these ideas were presented very effectively in the garden of a well known exhibitor, Mr. William Soltis, where another landscaping principle was also very well demonstrated - the need to plant roses closely. Though the Soltis garden is located in the warm climate of Norfolk, Virginia (U.S.A.), where temperatures cross 100°F with regularity in summer, yet close planting was the rule, with plants 1.5 feet apart, in informally shaped beds, edged with miniature roses. Paths were skilfully laid surrounding the beds, and the whole garden, which could not have been more than 500 sq. yds, was surrounded by hedges of roses, with a little stream and a bridge in Japanese style in one corner. On one side of the paths were the rose beds, and on the other groupings of various other plants, strongly influenced by the fact that Mrs. Soltis is from Japan. Camellias, azaleas ferns etc. formed the groupings.

In the bigger gardens, great care was taken about the arrangements of varieties, as well as making sure that the beds contained large numbers of the same variety, especially beds of H.T's and Floribundas so that the somewhat spotty colour effect of rose varieties planted in one's and two's was avoided. Of course, where roses differed considerably in habit of

growth and other features, e.g. shrub roses, landscaping effectiveness was achieved by mixing up other shrubs with contrasting leaf form and colour.

Again, talking of bigger gardens, very imaginative use made of features like pergolas and trellises covered with climbing roses, but invariably great care was taken to mix up varieties so that they flowered at different times, and with the companion plantings which could range from dwarf plants at the base of the pergola to other climbers - e.g., clematis with widely different appearance. A particularly charming example was the training of roses on catenaries, i.e. posts at regular intervals, joined by thick loops of rope with climbing roses trained up the posts and along the ropes, in the Queen Mary's Rose Garden in Regent's Park, London, where they formed the enclosure for the rose garden. In The Royal National Rose Garden (R.N.R.S.) at St. Albans, there was a very nice sunken garden with miniatures and other short growing rose varieties, mixed with other plants.

In the garden of Dr. Lind in New York, we saw a lovely example of a rock garden making use of miniatures, and in the Norfolk Botanical Garden, an artistic spiral in which miniatures were displayed, as well as a raised embankment, planted with roses, which also served as a viewpoint from which one could oversee the entire rose garden.

Everywhere, skilful use was made of water features, e.g. the charming small lake in Queen Mary's Rose Garden, and quite differently, by fountains in Longwood Gardens in the U.S. In the R.N.R.S., there was a delightful pool, the surroundings planted thoughtfully so as to enhance the beauty of the roses. Great care was taken to intermingle open vistas with enclosed areas, the feeling of enclosure being achieved either by rose hedges, by suitable trees, by catenaries and in Longwood Gardens,

by a combination of topiary and wall.

To conclude this section I can do no better than to quote from what Michael Gibson, former President of R.N.R.S. says in the little booklet 'Gardens of the Rose', as this reflects the direction of the new trend in landscaping rose gardens abroad. 'We were not taking advantage of the many other plants that consort well with roses, and greatly enhance them making a much more complete and satisfying garden picture Now, in cooperation with other specialist plant societies, most of which have no display gardens of their own, we are gradually, most of which have no display gardens of their own, we are gradually putting this right; our long term aim is to extend considerably our present 5 month opening period which coincides of course with the period when roses are in bloom and to create a garden for all seasons, though one in which the rose always plays the dominant role."

Clearly, under Indian conditions, there is considerable scope for improvisation and imaginative planting of rose gardens, especially with several new gardens being planned for the forthcoming World Rose Convention in 1994.

Cultural Practices

One aspect which immediately attracts attention is the extensive use of mulches in the rose beds with various organic and inorganic materials ranging from garden compost to chipped bark and plastic. In the R.N.R.S. garden experiments were in progress for the use of the following as mulches: rotted manure, dead leaves, grass clippings, chopped garden waste, sedge peat, black plastic, fruit of the earth, prime mulch (both proprietary products), King size nuggets, horticultural fibre, forest bark, and chipped bark.

In contrast, very little use of mulch is made in India, when actually it becomes all the more important in our warm climate, both as a means of moisture retention, and as weed control. One feature that should be mentioned is that the mulch has to be laid on quite thick, at least 3" deep, to be effective.

Clearly, rose growers abroad believe in strictly following rotation of areas under roses, in order to avoid problems of soil sickness. Two interesting examples come to mind. The R.N.R.S grounds and the Harkness Nursery. In the R.N.R.S., the area set apart for the trials is much larger than seems necessary - almost the size of a football field - with only a small portion actually planted with roses under trial, so that there is scope for continuing the next batch of planting in an entirely different area every year. At the Harkness Nursery, Mr. Peter Harkness told me that every year they take 10-15 acres of land on lease in different blocks to raise that year's crop of roses in fresh soil.

Regarding fertilization, there was great emphasis on continuous feeding during the growing season in order to ensure that the roses had optimum quantities of nutrients all the time while avoiding the pitfalls of excess/shortage of nutrients at different stages of growth. This was achieved by either of 2 approaches, the first being the use of slow release fertilizers of the type of Osmocote, which is N.P.K. coated with a polymer to ensure that the nutrients are released over a period of time to cover the growing season, and not all at once. One application of such a slow release fertilizer is enough for the entire season. An altogether different approach was that of ace exhibitor, Dr. Thomas Cairns, who incidentally won several prizes in the R.N.R.S. Show in England with flowers from California, where he lives. He feeds his roses every week in the growing season with the following :

- 1st week : N.P.K
- 2nd week : Epsom Salt (magnesium sulphate)
- 3rd week : Organic fertilizer e.g fish emulsion
- 4th week : High nitrogen

Repeat throughout the growing season.

Naturally since fertilizer/manure is to be applied weekly, the dosage will have to be suitably modified so that there is no toxic build up of nutrients.

As everywhere else in the world, there is a movement away from the purely inorganic (fertilizer) approach to the problem of manuring plants. One interesting example was the 'fragrant formula' of Howard Walters, Past President of the American Rose Society who swears by the formula, consisting of the following: “

- 3 ample yards of compost materials or leaves
- 100 pounds of coarse organic stuff like ground pine bark
or cottonseed hulls
- 100 pounds of cottonseed meal
- 100 pounds of alfalfa meal
- 50 pounds of bonemeal
- 50 pounds of fish meal

If fish meal is not available, substitute a couple of sacks of manure and may be add 20 pounds of bloodmeal or beef and bone. There are lots of variations that will work.

The Digestion Process.... Make a pile of the coarse materials in any area suitable for composting, maybe an old flower bed. Add the lighter

ingredients a little at a time and turn with a pitchfork. Mix well. Then moisten LIGHTLY and turn with a fork twice a week for 2 weeks.

A sharp ammonia odour will escape if the pile is working properly. A DIFFERENT (dead) odour will leak if the mix is too wet or if there is not enough coarse material. The Fragrant Formula is ready in about 3 weeks. WARNING: The pile will turn into a slime if allowed to get too wet during the digestion process. Use about 2 garden shovelful per established plant for the 1st feeding in the spring. One shovelful can be used as a supplement in summer. If the soil is acid skip the cottonseed meal and substitute compost. These organics in the spring will make other fertilizers work better, feeding the micro-organisms that do all the work converting soil nutrients into forms roses can use. With the Fragrant Formula you'll have live soil, healthy organisms and lots of roses. Use generously. It really works."

In India we will have to modify it using materials locally available, but the principle remains the same.

On pesticide application, the emphasis is on safety, with the increased concern on environmental damage caused by excessive use of pesticides, as well as the risk to the gardener himself because of exposure to toxic sprays. Safety precaution when applying pesticides are stringently adhered to wearing of gloves and masks. There is also continuous review by the environmental protection agencies to eliminate hazardous pesticides.

Contrary to the general impression we have in India, water scarcity is also something to be contended with, even in England these days, and more so in the U.S. So watering schedules are very carefully worked out and various devices used to reduce water requirement eg. mulches, as

also the use of water absorbent soil polymers, both for roses in the ground and in containers.

Finally, the overall impression is that every effort is made in Western rose gardens to emphasize the diversity available in the rose family. Very rarely are rose gardens, even the smallest ones, confined to just H.T's, and everywhere there is abundant use of other kinds of roses, including the newly developed ground covers (in larger gardens) and patio and climbing miniatures (in smaller gardens). Some of the popular ground cover roses are 'Grouse', 'Pheasant', etc. (named after various game birds) and 'County' series - 'Surrey', 'Suffolk' etc. Among the climbing miniatures, a group of Red Cascades is impressed on my memory, and there is much interest in roses like Nozomi, as well as the new miniature climbers bred by amateur Chris Warner - Laura Ford, yellow, and Warm Welcome, orange.

Copies of the original

Indian Rose Annual 1988

ROSE GROWING ABROAD

M. S. Viraraghavan

During a recent visit abroad we saw several beautiful rose gardens, ranging from very large public gardens to those of champion exhibitors, and I'd like to share some observations with you. Broadly speaking, the observations relate to 2 aspects :

1. Landscaping, and
2. Cultural practices.

Of course, what follows is essentially highly subjective, being a very personal reaction.

Landscaping

If one is to sum up what basically is different about landscaping abroad, I would say it is a relaxed informality of approach where roses are not rigidly planted in beds with military precision, but are mainly the dominant theme supplemented by diverse other features. The latter could be groupings with other plants or various architectural features (not painted), and the skilful use of open vistas, enclosed areas as well as water. It is as though the Queen of flowers, like other modern queens, mingles with the commoners in order to remain popular.

Quite sometime back, the way to make an effective rose garden was demonstrated by Dr. B. P. Pal, when he made a feature of standard roses underplanted with blue pansies. In a similar way, we found that in many Western gardens, roses, even the H.T's were cheerfully mixed with a variety of small growing annuals and perennials, e.g. campanulas (bell flowers), begonias and various other dwarf plants.



RNRS Trial Ground 12th Sept. 1991



"Tombola" RNRS Gardens, St. Albans 12th Sept. 1991



"Savoy Hotel" Queen Mary's Garden Regents Park
13th Sept. 1991



Pond in Queen Mary's Garden
Regent's Park, London 13th Sept. 1991

Generally, 2 objectives were realized by this kind of grouping —

- a. setting off the beauty of roses by mixing them with other plants of contrasting foliage, flowers and colours, and growth habit, and
- b. prolonging the season where the rose garden is full of flowers while seeking to fill up gaps, when roses are not in bloom, by timing the other plants to flower in those periods.

Some of these ideas were presented very effectively in the garden of a well known exhibitor, Mr. William Soltis, where another landscaping principle was also very well demonstrated - the need to plant roses closely. Though the Soltis garden is located in the warm climate of Norfolk, Virginia (U.S.A.), where temperatures cross 100°F. with regularity in summer, yet close planting was the rule, with plants 1½ feet apart, in informally shaped beds, edged with miniature roses. Paths were skilfully laid surrounding the beds, and the whole garden, which could not have been more than 500 sq. yds, was surrounded by hedges of roses, with a little stream and a bridge in Japanese style in one corner. On one side of the paths were the rose beds, and on the other groupings of various other plants, strongly influenced by the fact that Mrs. Soltis is from Japan. Camellias, azaleas ferns etc. formed the groupings.

In the bigger gardens, great care was taken about the arrangements of varieties, as well as making sure that the beds contained large numbers of the same variety, especially beds of H.T's and Floribundas so that the somewhat spotty colour effect of rose varieties planted in one's and two's was avoided. Of course, where roses differed considerably in habit of growth and other features, e.g. shrub roses, landscaping effectiveness was achieved by mixing up other shrubs with contrasting leaf form and colour.

Again, talking of bigger gardens, very imaginative use was made of features like pergolas and trellises covered with climbing roses, but invariably great care was taken to mix up

varieties so that they flowered at different times, and with the companion plantings which could range from dwarf plants at the base of the pergola to other climbers-e.g., clematis with widely different appearance. A particularly charming example was the training of roses on catenaries, i.e. posts at regular intervals, joined by thick loops of rope with climbing roses trained up the posts and along the ropes, in the Queen Mary's Rose Garden in Regent's Park, London, where they formed the enclosure for the rose garden. In The Royal National Rose Garden (R.N.R.S.) at St. Albans, there was a very nice sunken garden with miniatures and other short growing rose varieties, mixed with other plants.

In the garden of Dr. Lind in New York, we saw a lovely example of a rock garden making use of miniatures, and in the Norfolk Botanical Garden, an artistic spiral in which miniatures were displayed, as well as a raised embankment, planted with roses, which also served as a viewpoint from which one could oversee the entire rose garden.

Everywhere, skilful use was made of water features, e.g. the charming small lake in Queen Mary's Rose Garden, and quite differently, by fountains in Longwood Gardens in the U.S. In the R.N.R.S., there was a delightful pool, the surroundings planted thoughtfully so as to enhance the beauty of the roses. Great care was taken to intermingle open vistas with enclosed areas, the feeling of enclosure being achieved either by rose hedges, by suitable trees, by catenaries and in Longwood Gardens, by a combination of topiary and wall.

To conclude this section I can do no better than to quote from what Michael Gibson, former President of R.N.R.S. says in the little booklet 'Gardens of the Rose', as this reflects the direction of the new trend in landscaping rose gardens abroad. 'We were not taking advantage of the many other plants that consort well with roses, and greatly enhance them - making a much more complete and satisfying garden picture. Now, in cooperation with other specialist plant societies, most of which have no display gardens of their own, we are gradually putting this right; our long term aim is to extend

considerably our present 5 month opening period which coincides of course with the period when roses are in bloom and to create a garden for all seasons, though one in which the rose always plays the dominant role.'

Clearly, under Indian conditions, there is considerable scope for improvisation and imaginative planting of rose gardens, especially with several new gardens being planned for the forthcoming World Rose Convention in 1994.

Cultural Practices

One aspect which immediately attracts attention is the extensive use of mulches in the rose beds with various organic and inorganic materials ranging from garden compost to chipped bark and plastic. In the R.N.R.S. garden experiments were in progress for the use of the following as mulches: rotted manure, dead leaves, grass clippings, chopped garden waste, sedge peat, black plastic, fruit of the earth, prime mulch (both proprietary products), king size nuggets, horticultural fibre, forest bark, and chipped bark.

In contrast, very little use of mulch is made in India, when actually it becomes all the more important in our warm climate, both as a means of moisture retention, and as weed control. One feature that should be mentioned is that the mulch has to be laid on quite thick, at least 3" deep, to be effective.

Clearly, rose growers abroad believe in strictly following rotation of areas under roses, in order to avoid problems of soil sickness. Two interesting examples come to mind. The R.N.R.S. grounds and the Harkness Nursery. In the R.N.R.S., the area set apart for the trials is much larger than seems necessary- almost the size of a football field- with only a small portion actually planted with roses under trial, so that there is scope for continuing the next batch of planting in an entirely different area every year. At the Harkness Nursery, Mr. Peter Harkness told me that every year they take 10-15 acres of land on lease in different blocks to raise that year's crop of roses in fresh soil.

Regarding fertilization, there was great emphasis on continuous feeding during the growing season in order to ensure that the roses had optimum quantities of nutrients all the time while avoiding the pitfalls of excess/shortage of nutrients at different stages of growth. This was achieved by either of 2 approaches, the first being the use of slow release fertilizers of the type of Osmocote, which is N.P.K. coated with a polymer to ensure that the nutrients are released over a period of time to cover the growing season, and not all at once. One application of such a slow release fertilizer is enough for the entire season. An altogether different approach was that of ace exhibitor, Dr. Thomas Cairns, who incidentally won several prizes in the R.N.R.S. Show in England with flowers from California, where he lives. He feeds his roses every week in the growing season with the following :

- 1st week : N.P.K.
- 2nd week : Epsom Salt (magnesium sulphate)
- 3rd week : Organic fertilizer e.g. fish emulsion
- 4th week : High nitrogen

Repeat throughout the growing season.

Naturally since fertilizer/manure is to be applied weekly, the dosage will have to be suitably modified so that there is no toxic build up of nutrients.

As everywhere else in the world, there is a movement away from the purely inorganic (fertilizer) approach to the problem of manuring plants. One interesting example was the 'fragrant formula' of Howard Walters, Past President of the American Rose Society who swears by the formula, consisting of the following :

- "3 ample yards of compost, materials or leaves
- 100 pounds of coarse organic stuff like ground pine bark or cottonseed hulls
- 100 pounds of cottonseed meal
- 100 pounds of alfalfa meal
- 50 pounds of bonemeal
- 50 pounds of fish meal

If fish meal is not available, substitute a couple of sacks of manure and may be add 20 pounds of bloodmeal or beef and bone. There are lots of variations that will work.

The Digestion Process.... Make a pile of the coarse materials in any area suitable for composting, maybe an old flower bed. Add the lighter ingredients a little at a time and turn with a pitchfork. Mix well. Then moisten **LIGHTLY** and turn with a fork twice a week for 2 weeks.

A sharp ammonia odour will escape if the pile is working properly. A **DIFFERENT** (dead) odour will leak if the mix is too wet or if there is not enough coarse material. The Fragrant Formula is ready in about 3 weeks. **WARNING:** The pile will turn into a slime if allowed to get too wet during the digestion process. Use about 2 garden shovelful per established plant for the 1st feeding in the spring. One shovelful can be used as a supplement in summer. If the soil is acid skip the cottonseed meal and substitute compost. These organics in the spring will make other fertilizers work better, feeding the micro-organisms that do all the work converting soil nutrients into forms roses can use. With the Fragrant Formula you'll have live soil, healthy organisms and lots of roses. Use generously. It really works."

In India we will have to modify it using materials locally available, but the principle remains the same.

On pesticide application, the emphasis is on safety, with the increased concern on environmental damage caused by excessive use of pesticides, as well as the risk to the gardener himself because of exposure to toxic sprays. Safety precautions when applying pesticides are stringently adhered to - wearing of gloves and masks. There is also continuous review by the environmental protection agencies to eliminate hazardous pesticides.

Contrary to the general impression we have in India, water scarcity is also something to be contended with, even in England these days, and more so in the U.S. So watering schedules are very carefully worked out and various devices

used to reduce water requirement eg. mulches, as also the use of water absorbent soil polymers, both for roses in the ground and in containers.

Finally, the overall impression is that every effort is made in Western rose gardens to emphasize the diversity available in the rose family. Very rarely are rose gardens, even the smallest ones, confined to just H.T.'s, and everywhere there is abundant use of other kinds of roses, including the newly developed ground covers (in larger gardens) and patio and climbing miniatures (in smaller gardens). Some of the popular ground cover roses are 'Grouse' 'Pheasant', etc. (named after various game birds) and 'County' series - 'Surrey', 'Suffolk' etc. Among the climbing miniatures, a group of Red Cascades is impressed on my memory, and there is much interest in roses like Nozomi, as well as the new miniature climbers bred by amateur Chris Warner - Laura Ford, yellow, and Warm Welcome, orange.